

George Mason University
College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Communication
COMM 352 News Editing, Fall 2022 Monday/Wednesday; 10:30-11:45
3 credits, in-person meeting plan Innovation Hall, Room 330

Instructor: Brenna Maloney
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About this course

Welcome to News Editing. The course is designed to introduce you to the basics of news editing. The course will follow two tracks—broad, concept editing and narrow, copy/style editing. Big picture editing includes story conceptualization, as well as editing for accuracy, completeness, fairness, balance, sensitivity, and legal issues. Editing with precision encompasses grammar, punctuation, word usage, AP style, and other areas.

Learning objectives

Explore the role and responsibilities of an editor. Develop news judgment. Develop story judgment. Edit and evaluate copy with care. Implement AP style. Write clear and accurate headlines, decks, captions, and briefs. Understand the ethical issues confronting editors.

How this course is structured

Becoming a strong editor requires a lot of practice. That means learning new skills and then applying them. Our class will follow a specific format to help you do this. **Each Monday** will begin with a short editing lesson on something very specific—like punctuation, grammar, avoiding redundancy or using concise language. You will not like this. You will find it boring or irritating. But the things I will teach you will be the things you will run across all the time as an editor. **On Wednesday**, I will test you on these things. You will like this even less. But you will always be allowed to use your AP Stylebook during these quizzes, and the quizzes will be short. They are just a way to help us retain the stuff we are learning. Each week will cover a central theme, so when we aren't learning and quizzing ourselves on small things, we will be piecing things together to form bigger things, like how to edit ledes (leads), briefs, news stories, headlines and captions. And finally, we will tackle even bigger issues—legal and ethical—that editors must face. Some of this work will include lectures. Some of it will include group work. All of it will include editing. **Please attend class. The lectures are practical. I am telling you how to do this stuff, so try to be here to hear the advice!**

About your instructor

Brenna Maloney (that's me) has a bachelor's degree in public and corporate communication from Butler University and a master's degree in journalism from Michigan State University. I began my career as a graphics reporter for the Knight-Ridder Tribune wire service. I was a longtime reporter and editor for *The Washington Post* before leaving *The Post* to become the managing editor for National Geographic's *Explorer* magazine. I currently direct special projects for National Geographic's education department. I'm also a writing coach for corporate clients, and I write books in my spare time. I do not have a doctorate, so please just call me professor.

What you'll need

Please **always** bring to class the following:

—The *Associated Press Style Book* by the Associated Press. Please secure the 2020-2022 edition (55th edition) by **August 29**. This book is available for purchase through Mason's bookstore and online through various booksellers. Assume a cost of approximately \$20. Annual online/app subscriptions are also available directly through the [Associated Press](#). If you are having difficulties obtaining a copy of the stylebook, see me right away.

—A pen or pencil

—Something to take notes on (paper, notebook, laptop)

Note: Additional readings will be provided via handout or Blackboard.

Recommended: The New York Times online edition subscription. Sign up for your [FREE Mason student subscription](#).

Grading

George Mason University uses a 10-point +/- grading scale. The Communication Department has adopted the following scale which I will use to assign final grades.

A+	97% to 100%	B+	87% to 89%	C+	77% to 79%
A	93% to 96%	B	83% to 86%	C	70% to 76%
A-	90% to 92%	B-	80% to 82%	D	60% to 69%

Note: The COMM department does not award the grade of C minus; an "F" is 59% or less.

Note: I post all assignment grades on Blackboard. Please email me with grade questions!

What things are worth

Total grade

Editing quizzes

20%

Checking for your understanding; there will be a lot of these, but they are low-stakes and will be open-note.

Editing exercises

30%

A combination of in-class and on-your-own exercises; these are a bit more involved, but you'll have more time to do them.

Mid-term exam

15%

Final exam

15%

Engagement

10%

What you can look forward to

Note: This schedule is subject to change.

August 22:	Introduction and course overview
August 24:	The role of an editor; what do we mean by “editor” and what is “news”
August 29:	Intro to the AP Stylebook; ledes (summary news ledes)
August 31:	Ledes continued (alternative ledes)
September 5:	No class; Labor Day
September 7:	Basic news story (inverted-pyramid style)
September 12:	Basic news story (hourglass, focus or narrative)
September 14:	Trimming/Editing for space/Taking feeds
September 19:	Heds
September 21:	Quotations, attributions
September 26:	Photos, captions
September 28:	Photos, captions
October 3:	Mid-term exam
October 5:	Infographics/data
October 10:	No class; fall break
October 12:	Race, gender
October 17:	Fact checking/sources
October 19:	Fact checking/sources
October 24:	News judgment
October 26:	News judgment/story planning
October 31:	Working with writers
November 3:	Delivering feedback
November 7:	Editing and the law
November 9:	Editing and ethics
November 14:	Editing and ethics
November 16:	Long form editing
November 21:	Working the desk (A section/Metro, Business)
November 23:	No class; Thanksgiving break

November 28: Working the desk (Sports, Features)
November 30: Editing social media

December 5: Review
December 7: **Final exam**

IMPORTANT COURSE POLICIES

Our contract

This syllabus represents a contract between the student and the instructor. By remaining enrolled in this course each student accepts the policies covered in this syllabus, schedule, and GMU course policies. Therefore, please read these pages carefully and refer to them often.

Email communication

Communication outside of the classroom will be conducted using Mason email addresses and Blackboard tools. When I post announcements on Blackboard, I also email them to your @gmu.edu address. If you need to send me an email, please do! Be sure to include a subject in the subject header, start your message with a simple greeting like, “Hi Professor Maloney,” and do not forget to sign your email!

Deadlines

Deadlines are real, and I need you to meet them. Late work is not accepted. That said, stuff happens. If you are struggling to meet a deadline, reach out to me right away. If you blow the deadline altogether, come talk to me.

Plagiarism

For clarity on the various forms of plagiarism, check out this site: <https://www.plagiarism.org/> Reputation is everything in this business – don’t spoil yours. If I suspect you’ve plagiarized, I will refer the case to the Office of Academic Integrity for adjudication. This process is designed to protect your due process rights. The OAI will review your case and determine next steps. More information is available [here](#).

University Policies

[The University Catalog](#) is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other policies are available [here](#). All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies. This class will adhere to published university policies regarding sexual harassment and equal opportunity, and this class will follow all appropriate university regulations.

Academic Integrity

The GMU Honor Code applies to all students. The entire text of the code is available in the University Catalog or online [here](#). The principle of academic integrity is taken seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else’s work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous

discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. If you have questions of any kind, please ask for guidance.

Anti-Racism Statement

As a member of the George Mason Community, I will work to create an educational environment that is committed to anti-racism and inclusive excellence. I affirm that in this class, faculty and students will work together to interrupt cycles of racism against Black individuals, indigenous people, and other people of color so as to cultivate a more equitable, inclusive, and just learning environment for all participants, regardless of racial background.

Diversity & Inclusivity

Mason values diversity. Through the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education (ODIME), Mason seeks to create and sustain inclusive learning environments where all are welcomed, valued, and supported. In this course it is my intention to create a learning environment that fosters respect for people across all identities; to welcome and value individuals and their differences, including gender expression and identity, race, economic status, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age and ability. I encourage all members of this class to engage with the material personally, but to also be open to exploring and learning from experiences different than their own.

Name & pronoun use

If you wish, please share your name and gender pronouns with me and how best to address you in-person and via email.

Writing Center

The Writing Center offers FREE writing support in the form of face-to-face tutoring and online tutoring to Mason students. They will help with any and all stages of the writing process, from brainstorming and structuring to revising and polishing. A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200; <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

Online Education Services / Library Assistance

There is a dedicated learning team available to help online students with any library-related questions and needs. Click [here](#) for the Online Learning Team.

Netiquette

Craft your messages carefully to avoid misinterpretation. Keep these online strategies in mind: Avoid vague words, jargon and sarcasm. Limit the use of exclamation points. Change subject lines of email chains regularly as fitting to the current discussion. Plan carefully who you cc on a message. Edit meticulously. And, in this class, please share your thoughts and ideas with consideration for others' experiences and perspectives.

Religious holidays

It is the policy of GMU and this instructor to make every reasonable effort to allow members of our diverse university community to observe their religious holidays without academic penalty. Click [here](#) for a link to Mason University Life religious holiday calendar. It is your responsibility

to provide me with advance written notice of the dates of any major religious holidays for which you will be absent.

Student privacy

Please click [here](#) for information about student privacy and student rights under FERPA.

Disability accommodations

This university and this instructor are committed to providing an equitable learning environment for every student. Please contact the Office of Disability Resources (703-993-2474) to arrange accommodations. Disability Resources will provide you with a letter to give to me and/or you may request to have them directly contact me.

Collegiate compassion

I believe we learn best when we can show up as whole and healthy people. To learn effectively we need to have basic security: a roof over our head, a safe place to sleep, a stable place to live, and enough food to eat. If you are struggling to meet any of these basic needs please talk to me, visit our [campus food pantry](#), or reach out to [other Mason resources](#).

Special note for COVID-times

Hopefully the worst of Covid is behind us! But we are still living in strange and stressful times. My goal is to facilitate your growth and success in this strange and uncertain time; I can only do that if you tell me what is going on. Let's keep open lines of communication.

Parents and primary care givers

Our institution values diversity and inclusion, and this includes supporting students who also have parenting and family caregiver responsibilities. Students who are pregnant or parenting should consult this university resource for guidance Mason Families.

University counseling services

If you are experiencing feelings of anxiety, panic, depression, and/or sadness during the semester, Students Health Services and Counseling and Psychological Services Offices (703-993-2380; <http://caps.gmu.edu>) provide a range of resources to assist and support you. Students can call (703-993-2831) or walk-in during open hours to schedule an appointment to talk to a healthcare provider. If you or someone you know experiences a mental health crisis or emergency, seek help immediately. Call 911 for local emergency services, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255), or text the Crisis Text Line (741-741) anytime. I am also available to speak with you about stresses related to your work in this course.

Emergency procedures

GMU is dedicated to preparing staff and students in the event of an emergency. All students are encouraged to register for Mason Alert. Sign up here: <https://ready.gmu.edu/masonalert/>